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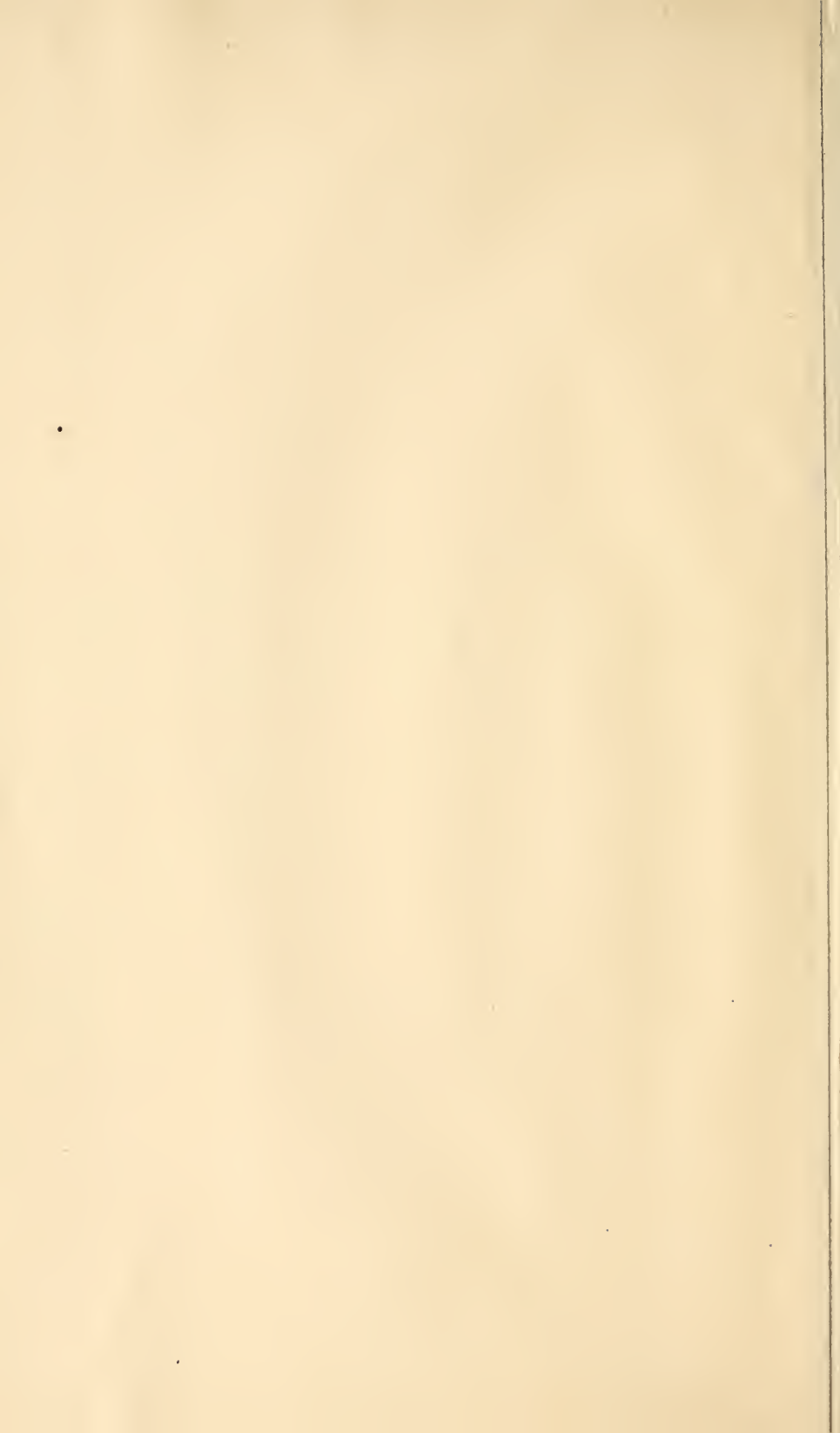
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Songs in the Night.

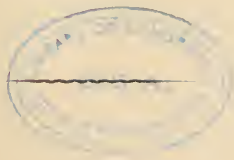
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A THANKSGIVING SERMON,

PREACHED IN EMMANUEL CHURCH, BALTIMORE, NOV. 26, 1863.

BY

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REV. N. H. SCHENCK,

RECTOR.



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S E R M O N.

Job xxxv. 10—"WHO GIVETH SONGS IN THE NIGHT."

HE knows but little of the moral economy under which we live, who finds no occasion for praise and thanksgiving to God, except in the day of prosperity. There is an under-current of teaching running through the whole of revelation, which carries to the mind a lesson of mingled tribulation and gratitude. While it is true that man was made for happiness, and can only legitimately rejoice in that condition; yet since his renunciation of his first and blessed estate, since he has become a child of wrath, since true happiness has been exiled from this sin-stricken planet, it only remains for him to rejoice in those experiences and prospects which shall best conduce to his restoration to forfeited joys. Now is it a regimen of adversity or prosperity which will the better secure the coveted end? Most true it is that He whose other name is Love "doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men." Therefore He appoints for us a reflowing pleasure to every outgoing effort. But as we have a haughty spirit whose pride cannot be curbed except by rigid rule, passions which cannot be quelled except by overmastering them, spiritual enemies only to be conquered by fierce conflict, temptations to be resisted but by crucial discipline, so is it also appointed to the end we may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing, conquerors, and more than conquerors, Christ being our Helper, that the broad arena of soul-effort should be darkly chequered with the shadows of adversity. Give place to the testimony of Paul, "I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation." Nay witness the unveiling of judgment. Who are the justified? "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Open the Book of Life where you will, and you shall be taught that the discipline of sorrow is most wholesome and necessary to the soul. Its exigencies demand it. Its calling and election are insecure without it. Hence the Pauline teaching, "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses." The great Apostle knew, as God knoweth, and as every man ought to know, that a life of prosperity and pleasure is a poor preparation for judgment, is too replete with beguilements to ensure to the soul the safety of its mighty interests. The same mouth which teaches that "the prosperity of fools shall destroy them," and which declares prophetically of the latter days, that then "prosperity shall destroy many," declares as well, voicing the confession of the accepted in Christ, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." If then, it be divinely ordained that adversity should frequently be the pioneer of Christian

progress, paving the way to future felicity, shall we not "thank God and take courage," even when the skies most darkly frown, and the blast of misfortune is fiercest. Like the inferior animals "which lack discourse of reason," shall we refuse to endure the present evil for the sake of the future good? Not penetrating the surface teaching of the Bible, shall we ignore that routine of duty and discipline indispensable to salvation. Absorbed in our selfishness, in the cravings and indulgences of the moment, in the lusts of the flesh and in the pride of life, shall we defiantly oppose those dispensations of Providence which are just as important, in their place, to the soul and the world, as the dispensation of grace? If not, and if you are not prepared to gainsay the whole drift of this Bible-derived argument, must you not also subscribe to the inevitable consequence, viz: that praise and thanksgiving are due,—are more due to God in times of adversity, by so much as then the soul is designed to be more rapidly advanced in that grace which leads to glory.

But unlike its great Ensample, the sorrow-trying spirit of man is not left to "tread the wine-press alone." "Lo! I am with you alway," says Jesus, the friend born for adversity. In every furnace of affliction, there is a companion and comforter whose "form is like the Son of God." In every night, however long and dreary, however bitter its cold and biting its blasts, however weary its watches or fatiguing its marches, however fruitful of danger and filled with affrights, still beneath its raven wing there is shelter, and on its waves of darkness there is cheer; for its air is ever vibrating with heavenly melodies,—the cadences of consolation flowing from the lips of that always present and all-sufficient Helper, "who giveth songs in the night."

The design of this Discourse, Beloved, is, while reviewing the circumstances naturally suggested for consideration on an occasion like the present, to bring distinctly to view "the bright light that is in the clouds;" to call attention to the songs which are given of God in every night of trial; or, in plainer words, to shew that in civil, as in spiritual, in national as in personal life the Divine Governor maketh "the wrath of man to praise Him," ordaineth every chastening for the production of "the peaceable fruit of righteousness," subsidizes all the events and operations of earth and man to the enhancement of His own glory: and therefore is entitled to the praise and thanksgiving of His creatures, as well in the night-time of their adversity, as in the day-time of their prosperity.

It is a time-honored custom, and as we fain suppose, well-pleasing to God, that after the season of annual ingathering is ended, the hearts and hands of the people should be lifted up in "prayer and thanksgiving to Almighty God, for the fruits of the earth, and all the other blessings of his merciful Providence." The grateful recipients of our Father's bounty should spontaneously make such returns of devotion, but our Church stimulates, by giving a proper Directory for such worship, accepting at the same time the day appointed by the civil authority. We are here, then, to-day, gathered around our public Altar, summoned by the Church, the State, and our own grateful souls. God grant that the solemnity of the call, the place, the act and the hour may so possess the hearts of worshippers, as to lift them up to sweeter and holier communion with Him who giveth songs of thanksgiving in the night of our national calamity,

Never before during the eighty-seven years of this country's civil life, have the people gone up to the temple to chant God's praises and record their gratitude with such heavy hearts and tearful faces. Never before has the world beheld a spectacle so awful, as a "puissant nation mewing her mighty youth" for three-quarters of a century, then to wreak her pent-up power in an intestine and internecine strife. Never before has the arm of God been so clearly bared in behalf of national progress and expansion, as in the experience of our history, and never so terrific a retribution visited upon a people for their sins and wickedness. Never before have the citizens of a State enjoyed for so long and so uninterruptedly the blessings of civil and religious liberty; grasping so many of the appointments of mechanical, commercial and agricultural success, holding in hand so many helps to mental development and intellectual triumphs,—and, yet, who upon the instant have experienced such complete revolution in the elements and operations of their great economy. Never before have God's creatures been so peculiarly blessed with facilities for instituting and sustaining spiritual life, the Gospel so freely trumpeted, the conscience so unshackled, Bibles so abounding, agencies so numerous, varied and energetic; and yet Pagan lands put us to the blush as to the proportion of those earnestly occupied with religious duty. Instead of living up to our privileges, the Protean shapes of sin are defiantly paraded through the length and breadth of the land. We have not only to mourn over the meaner vices, which seek a covert, but "wickedness in high places," clothed in purple and ermine, has been and is the warning sign for this perverse generation; and "because sentence against our evil works has not been executed speedily, the heart of the sons of men seems fully set in them to do evil." And even now, when the punitive wrath of the Lord is loosened, the curvetting pride of the people scorns the control of bit and bridle. Can it be denied that in this eventful crisis, men are less occupied in looking up to learn the will of Heaven, than in looking around and before them to execute their own. Gainsay it who will, the inspiration of the hour is not derived from the breathings of the Spirit of God, so much as it is from the exhalations of the seething caldron of political necessity. Vainly do we invoke a return of peace, and the glorious prosperities possessed in the past, until we fulfil the conditions annexed to the enjoyment of God's favor, and behold the heart of the nation humbled and bowed down, and hear the united utterances of the people, blended in sweet accord, and bearing upward the confession—"Father not our will but Thine be done."

I believe there is no difference of opinion in recognizing war as the greatest curse which can rest upon a nation, and civil war as the most aggravated form of this scourge of God. For two years and a half the land of our love has reeled under this woful infliction. And as in all the elements of national life, progress and prosperity, we have been habituated to magnitudes, so now when the gates of Janus are open, and the bugle blast of war awakens the energies of conflict, we behold an array of men speaking the same language and heirs to the same inheritance, such as never before were gathered and armed and marshalled for battle. The insatiate earth, now quaking beneath the martial tread of a million men, has, since the strife began, given to half that

number "a soldier's sepulchre." We have not been spared the inevitable results of war. It has already ripened its harvest of woe. The wind has quickened and maddened into the whirlwind. In our enthusiastic devotion to what we believe is the right, in our burning desire for the end, in our struggles and sacrifices to attain it, it will not do for us to close our eyes to enacting events, or shut our ears to the lessons of the hour, lest perchance, we lose the profit which is ordained to follow the devout considering of adversity. No, no, whatever and whenever the end, we must be true to the Divine teachings of the present. And these are only to be received by fairly viewing our surrounding circumstances. We want then least of all from the pulpit, the honeyed words which shall speak "peace, peace, when there is no peace" "to the wicked saith my God." We want no time-serving appeals to patriotism to absorb the mind and heart—only too anxious to be relieved from its pressing anxieties—too anxious to be continually beguiled. What we want in times like these, when the waters of worldliness so flow in upon the sanctuary, as even to threaten extinction to the fire upon the altar, what we want, is plain words calling christian men to stand fast by Godly principle and Gospel practice, and pointing the Church and the Country to the crimson panorama unfolding before them, to demand that they be not blind to the pictured teachings of God. I recur then to the fact, that we are engaged in a bloody war. Already every city and hamlet has been draped in mourning weeds for the fallen brave. Already have wide districts been desolated, and well nigh depopulated. Blood has gushed in fountains and treasure been lavished without reserve. The land is red with its hundred battle fields. Louder than the roar of Niagara are the continued thunder and reverberations of the furious conflict. Scarcely entombed the victims of one day's fight, ere the charge is sounded for another onset. While far away from these scenes of carnage there is wailing in the cottage and the mansion. In town and country the air is quivering with the moaning cry of the mother and the wife. Not now, not now, for the feeble voice of the wounded spirit is unheard amid the noise and tumult of war: but hereafter shall we listen to the melting histories which connect the home and the battle plain, hereafter see the wreck and ravage which brood by the once happy fireside, hereafter look on the blighted hopes and crushed affections and lacerated hearts which lie thickly scattered along the track of war. No forecasting of the future is needed however to fill to the overflowing the cup of our calamity. The alienation of friends, the suspension of confidence, the impairing of public credit, the derangement of business, the interruptions to commerce, the conflicts of civil and military authority, the apathy of the Church, the lowering of the standard of religion, and the alarming increase of luxury and reckless extravagance,—these superadded to the thousand miseries of our fraternal strife, so charge the air with gloom and roll their black clouds overhead, as to leave us bowed with sorrow and groping in the dark, with a heart only for the mournful cry, "Is it not enough, oh God, is it not enough!"

But He, who "in the midst of wrath remembereth mercy," He, "who giveth songs in the night," hath put a song of thanksgiving in our mouth, now, even in this time of dark disaster; for His promise has not failed His

people, "seed time and harvest" have not been forgotten; the rains descending "upon the just and the unjust," have fertilized the pregnant fields, the sun has ripened the corn and the fruit, and to-day the song of our harvest home, a song given to us in the night of our civil calamity, goes gladly up to God in token of gratitude rekindled and faith unimpaired.

The statistics of agriculture teach us, that the broad acres of our American soil have a productive power equal to the supply of the world. The season just ended has fully sustained their character for fertility. The seed planted in the flowery May has yielded its manifold increase in the golden summer and russet autumn. The sweat of the face has not rolled in vain. The tawny tiller of the fields has seen the fruit of his toil in "barns filled with plenty and presses bursting out with new wine." The lowing herd, the folded flock, the various orders of animals, given for man's sustenance and comfort, have been fed and fattened by the nutritious grains and grasses which the earth has so profusely produced. All nature has been busy in her effort to make provision for the wants of man. Offerings are made by meadow and hill, by orchard and forest, by vineyard and garden, by babbling brook and rolling river, by spreading lake and heaving ocean. The heats of summer have been tempered. The clouds have dropped their rain in refreshing and fertilizing showers. The winds have only been loosened from their caves to blow in genial and invigorating breezes. The heavenly bodies have beamed their beauteous light, and shed their mystic influences upon us, choiring their celestial melodies with the many voices of the animate earth. And now after this seed time and harvest of bounteous benefaction, we come up to the temple, entering "His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise;" and joining our hands around the altar, we lift up our grateful song,—floating it out upon the night of our national sorrow, and shouting it upward to the throne of the glorious Giver,—"Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be unto our God forever and ever, Amen."

We are enjoined to give thanks to-day, not only "for the fruits of the earth," but also "for all the other blessings of His merciful Providence." Let us then give ear to other melodies which mingle with harvest home anthems, for be assured, He giveth yet other songs in the night of our nation's mourning. On former occasion, like this, have we blessed the Lord, Most High, for sparing us the pestilence that walketh in darkness? When has there been a period of more general health than the twelve month just past? Have we, in days gone by, praised God for His goodness in giving us His Word, His Son and His Spirit? Are they not continued to us in undiminished measure? Have we formerly lifted our hearts gratefully in view of our peculiar and precious Church privileges? Have we not the Gospel proclaimed and the Sacraments dispensed as freely and faithfully now as ever? Do we remember the thanks we offered before the throne, in view of the joys conferred by the "cloistered sweets" of home and family? Go back from this Temple of Prayer, and stand beneath the shelter of your own roof tree, and gazing upon the firstlings of your human heart, and the comforts which surround them, confess to God, in a glow of gratitude, that the cup of His kindness is still

held to your lips. What advantage of education, what agency of evangelization, what organization of benevolence, what comfort of civilized society, what intellectual indulgences, what artistic pleasures has the Dispenser of all now withholden for a time, that He should not receive the same meed of praise—the same awards of gratitude. That there are other lands beyond the sea, and that there are places near us where the bloody tide of war has rolled, which have been deprived certain of the blessings here enumerated, is a truth as painful, as it is positive. But however we may be led by christian charity to commiserate their sufferings, and sympathize in their sorrow, we are not to be the less grateful to God, while with lavish hand, He droppeth benefits upon us—

“As laden boughs in Autumn,
Fling their ripe fruits to the ground.”

We are each to act with reference to our personal dispensations of grace and Providence. “To his own Master, each one standeth or falleth,” and in the day of account, even charity will not suffice to mantle from view our sins of ingratitude. Whatever the lessons taught to others, let us fail not to study our own. However dark the war cloud may lower—however much of desolation and death there may be around us, since God has come to us with the same measure and variety of blessed providences, does He not demand of us the same measure of praise. When He giveth us, not one, but many songs in the night, shall we refuse to sing them? Nay, nay, beloved, lift up your hearts in melody to the Lord, let tributary Psalms go up on high in sweet accord; for God hath “not forgotten to be gracious,” in the “midst of wrath, He remembereth mercy,” and “giveth us songs in the night”

Thus do we invite you to “prayer and thanksgiving to Almighty God, for the fruits of the earth, and all the other blessings of His merciful Providence.”

As in the beginning, we attempted to show that the Christian should thankfully submit to the exercises of chastening, as conducive to his highest interests, so, does it not become our duty in a time like this, to examine the afflictive circumstances which surround us, that we may co-operate with the Holy Spirit, in the benign work proposed; and, haply, find occasion as did Paul, to rejoice and glory, even in tribulation,—knowing that it “worketh patience and experience, and hope.” Shall not the scrutiny reveal the moral events of the hour as so many conduits of grace, rolling into the soul heavenly teaching and heavenly help; and thus shall we find them again like fabled Memnons, breaking the gloom of the night with sweetest songs, when kissed by the opening light of God.

The present is an *era of comparative religious indifference*. Not, but what there is great apparent religious activity in certain quarters. Not, but what there is an amount of religious awakening even, in places specially favored. But it is impossible, in the nature of things, that a people should endure the throes and convulsions of civil war without a benumbing of religious sensibility. Can you array brother against brother in deadly strife, can you let loose the animal ferocity of man, and invoke its unbridled indulgence as leading the way to glory and success, and at the same time, expect that charity and its

sister virtues should have the same development and exercise. When dove-eyed peace is frightened away to her thickest covert by the hoarse baying of the hounds of war, as they go coursing through the land, and when the Church of God mails herself for the strife, and takes up carnal weapons to aid in establishing a kingdom that is *of* this world, what other consequence can ensue than that Christians should be secularized, and the tone of piety impaired. So sensitive is the Gospel, so single-eyed the ministry, that the moment we commingle things civil and things sacred, the former usurps dominion, and claims co-ordinate, if not paramount position in working out the purposes of God. The effect of all this is immediate and demoralizing upon the popular mind. Only yesterday, I read in the daily press of the great metropolis of this Western continent, that never before had been made such lavish preparations for the carnival of fashion as are now in progress. Meantime, men give largely to benevolent objects. Churches are busy in their machinery of evangelization, and as far as the human eye can scan the field of moral effort, all seems promising and progressive. But, oh! let us remember that gold and the gospel are not complements of each other, that it is "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord;" that only by closest adhesion to the fundamental truths of Christ's religion we can expect to carry the Church through such an ordeal as the present without spot or blemish. The highest order of patriotism, the purest devotion to country, the largest sacrifices which men can make for the preservation of free institutions, are only consistent, when brought to harmonize with true loyalty to Christ. I honor, with all the reverential feeling of my heart, the man, who, under sublime conviction, will do and die in defence of noble principle; but I cannot honor him, who, in any emergency, compromises the honor of Jesus; who cannot pursue his line of effort holding it parallel from first to last with the path of gospel duty. And here stands the baneful influence of the hour. The maxim, that human laws are silent or suspended, because of the exigencies of war, argues not that the laws of God are liable to such suspension. Never but once did the Sun stand still upon Gibeon, and the Moon in the valley of Ajalon. Because man has mighty purposes to effect, he may not neglect or defy for the time the eternal and unchanging decrees of the Most High. Malice and hate and evil speaking are just as sinful now as ever they were. Love to enemies, long suffering and forgiveness, are just as inflexibly demanded of Christians as ever they were. Insulted patriotism and righteous indignation and necessary retaliation are beautiful, it may be, but most beguiling phrases. No, no, war is impossible. I repeat, in the earthly order, or rather disorder of things, without dragging in its bloody train, evils of well nigh every grade and character. What mainly concerns us communing in this House of Prayer, is that they should have invaded the Church in desolating raids, and lowered the standard of its spirituality. But from this cloud which thickens our gloom, is there not the reflection of a star beam? What song is written upon the folds of this black canopy pencilled by the ray of Heaven? "He will not always chide, neither keepeth He His anger forever." "O Israel! fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine." "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils."

“Put not your trust in princes.” “Vain is the help of man.” “Return unto me, for I have redeemed thee.” The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice. Yea, let all the people praise Thee.

This is an *era of suspicion*. Confidence, that plant of slow growth, seems to have withered under the sun of war. The faith which man had in his fellow, the trust wont to be reposed in all the domestic and business relations of life is suddenly and woefully impaired. That beautiful feeling which seemed almost to prepare and pave the way for the entrance of the faith of Christ, is in good degree excluded from the dealings and intercourse of society. There is a disposition prevalent to erect tribunals of judgment even upon the most fragile and unworthy foundations. Men are daily electing themselves judges of their brethren, and are prepared to pronounce hasty decisions, and execute summary penalties upon all who do not square with their personal decrees of right and wrong. Congregations of censors, with itching ears, are waiting upon the pulpit utterances of to-day, disposed to applaud or condemn, according to the varying standards of individual minds. Woe! woe! to the men pleasers in times like these, when God especially demands independent spokesmen for His independent truth. Intolerance, the hand-maiden of suspicion, is busy with her brawling tongue. Differences in minor matters, as between those who agree in great essentials, are enough now to break the bond of faith, and even of association. Applauded to the echo is the sentiment, that he who is once called in question, no matter by whom or for what, should henceforth be excluded from all fiduciary positions. In political life, in the direction of military affairs, in Christian society, in the church,—her clergy and laity,—who dare say that suspicion, prowling in her mask, is not exercising an arrogated and unholy office. Mutual confidence is the cohering principle of all earthly organizations. When you strike at its root, you are destroying the life of every thing which gives value to human society. You are attempting to overturn the foundation of every moral and political fabric. When you introduce suspicion into the Church of God, you throw a firebrand upon the altar, you disturb the communion of saints, you break up the fellowship of those who are together enlisted in the Army of Christ, you interfere with the publication and spread of the gospel, you attempt to choke the utterances and chain the hands of those who have divine commissions to speak the same unchanging truth,—no matter whether it be to some a stumbling block and to others foolishness,—still now and always “to them that believe the power of God to salvation.” I could tell you of those, who have been standing in positions, where God has placed and kept them, and who have been deprived the backing of a unanimous popular sentiment touching the issues of the hour. Around them have raged the angry winds and waves, while upon the gospel rock they have kept their footing, with eye upturned and finger pointing only to Christ as “He who hath his way in the whirlwind,” who rideth upon the storm, “whom the winds and the sea obey,” and who only has power “to rule the raging of the sea,” and “speak peace” to its troubled waters. Indignant voices have called to these tried servants of the Lord to cast themselves into the flood. No word of approval from brethren who are sheltered in havens where genial winds blow

always in the same direction. No sympathy because of the circumstances of trial by which God has been pleased to surround his servants. But stimulated to enthusiasm by the awful warring of the elements, (contemplated from a safe distance,) these critical members of the priestly brotherhood are unable to appreciate that calm and unchangeable discharge of duty, which no element of passion or power can suspend or modify. It is only left them, then, to withdraw that confidence which has become extortionate in its demands as it is morbid in its sensibility. In better days and under a clearer light, we shall hope for its restoration to healthy life. But let us not neglect the teaching imparted by these painful facts to which we have referred. As they combine to make a very important element in this dispensation of chastening, as they deepen the gloom of our moral night, what song, O God! what cheering strain bursts out from the darkness, given of Thee to strengthen and gladden the hearts of Thy people? "By terrible things in righteousness, wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation; who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth"—"who stilleth the noise of the seas and the tumult of the people." "Some trust in chariots and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God." "It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put any confidence in man." "I will trust in the covert of thy wings." They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mt. Zion, which cannot be removed but abideth forever." "Thou art my hiding place, thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance."

The present is *an era of revolution*. So calmly and peacefully have rolled away the decades of our national existence, so completely have we been exempt from the ordinary convulsions of the state, that when civil war unfurled its baneful flag, the revolutionary germs, pressed down so long beneath the sublime march of law and order, at once shot up to vigorous life. Two years and a half of conflict have afforded ample time for these germs to fructify; and now we find a proclivity in every department of our aggregate life to re-organization, or at least to re-adjustment. I speak not only of theorists who would seize upon the crisis as a period opportune for political and social experiment, but I point you to a rapidly developing temper of unrest and lawlessness which pervades the ranks of the people. Submission to rightful authority, acquiescence in the established order of society are not infrequently and very defiantly brought into question, even as the abuse of power and privilege is also become a crying evil. All this is fearfully ominous. Great changes are doubtless impending in the constitutional life and administration of our institutions, and we should not be surprised to see all the forces of the popular mind and heart exercised in the issues now making head. There are great changes in the relations of trade already effected and greater ones in progress. The rush of events have crushed or cast aside many who controlled society, or directed the current of business, or gave complexion to political affairs; while others have wakened to sudden wealth or found "greatness thrust upon them." In places, poverty is pinching those who have commanded the luxuries of a Sybarite. Again we observe the newly enriched vying with the habitué of Fashion's temple in the lavish expenditure of money, in an extravagance, a luxurious indulgence unexampled in modern times. And

this Saturnalia seems not yet to have attained to the full unbridled license to appetite which it proposes. The mind of the country is in that peculiarly plastic state which enables it with extreme facility to adapt itself to new forms of thought, new modes of life, novelties of all kinds, though the changes be as rapid and as varied as the quick and brilliant combinations of the kaleidoscope. The era, I repeat, is intensely charged with the explosive and incendiary elements of revolution. No cloud more portentous than this, that has, as yet, rolled up and mingled its black volumes with the darkness that curtains our skies; and yet He "who giveth songs in the night," has manifested his goodness by thus far holding in check the storm power which slumbers in that cloud. No daring demagogue has been permitted to combine these agencies of evil, and launch them as poisoned javelins against the heart of the nation. Nay, may not this very condition of things be the grand preparation for the on-coming glory of the Lord; His Holy Spirit pressing upon the plastic heart those saving truths which made no inscription there while it was hardened by habit and fixed in the iron grooves of precedent and convention. We know not what will be, but this we know, that "no weapon formed against Thee shall prosper." "The righteous shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked." Though the people rage and imagine a vain thing, yet God bringeth to naught their evil imaginations, and "casteth down them that exalt themselves against the Lord." Though the power of the people be as the roar and rush of a flood, yet is "the Lord mightier than many waters;" and as "He measureth the waters in the hollow of His hand," so will He measure and mete out, bind or loosen, the forces of the people.

The present is a *tragic era*. In passing through the inevitable experiences of national life, we have come at length to stand as actors in or audience to a fearful tragedy. No one can look upon the scene without emotion, for each one "has some friend or brother there." Not a breeze that sweeps across battle plain or hospital but bears to us the moans of the wounded or the farewells of the dying. The ear has become familiarized to sounds of woe, and the eye to every variety of bodily mutilation and every attitude of death. Consequent upon all this comes a reduction of the value of human life. The ranks thinned to-day are filled to-morrow and the mournful dead march is directly changed into the gleeful quickstep. And as we grow indifferent to the value of life, we become proportionately indifferent to those great moral interest attached to life. Therefore, vice riots in the track of war, and in the intervals of the acts of the great tragedy, minor tragedies have place. It is difficult for us, so habituated is the mind to our traditions of peace, it is very difficult for us fairly to realize that we are making for history the bloodiest record which has ever crimsoned its scroll. It is very difficult for us to adapt ourselves to this dispensation of death. It is difficult for us to appreciate the fact that we have suddenly become not only a military but a warlike people. But difficult as it is, the mind must open for the entrance, and widen for the embrace of these tragical ideas. Peace has here achieved her sublimest victories. And now that she is dethroned, shall red-handed war vie with her in securing triumphs as magnificent? It is not the prowess of the conqueror or the trophies of the conquest which can match the glories of

peace, but only the ultimate adjustment of vital issues, the permanent settlement of those vexed questions which are ever threatening convulsion and strife. I have no space here to discuss the anti-christian aspect of war, but accepting for the moment the popular sentiment, that when begun, it is directed of God for the accomplishment of His own purposes, how can we fail to thank Him this day, that "we are accounted worthy to suffer," if so be we can thus be the instruments for working His mighty will. If "we be true men," we should be ready to serve Him, by our death as well as by our life. And this is the song which breathes out upon the night, the night which hides from the stars the bloody work of man,—“For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lords.”

The present is *an era of unmasking*. The stern events now marching before us in rapid procession, tear away as they pass, the masks from men's faces. The world is so given over to dissembling that the great dramatist who wrote "the world a stage" and "men the players," might with equal verisimilitude, have pictured society as an unending masquerade. But now that features are revealed, we are surprised not only to observe deformities where we imagined symmetry, but also to discover the lineaments of virtue, where we conceived it had no place. With judgment begun at the house of God let us remark the development of a high ministerial fidelity in some, as contrasted with a disposition in others to succumb to the secular influences of the hour. The sweets of popularity, the honors and emoluments of civil or military service, I may not say, have deluded any from that singleness of purpose in saving souls to which they solemnly gave themselves. No, for I award to them the credit of honest conviction and holy sincerity. Still is it left to me and to many, to deplore the error, and its grievous influence now and hereafter, over those who look to the Church for the undimmed reflections of "truth as it is in Jesus." How many are there among Clergy and Laity who have revealed the most beautiful charity, who have been not only "slow to speak and slow to wrath," but who have ministered to the sick and wounded, not asking whether friend or foe, and played an angel part in the drama of death. How many have made patriotism the pretext for plunder, and preyed upon their country in the hour of her trial. How many again have offered their choicest gifts, and spared not husband or son. What pictures of folly sketched by those "dressed in a little brief authority." And again, what sublime daring—what heroic resolve—what magnificent achievement. How many christian men and women have entered the embattled arena, and there exercised offices of help for soul and body. What beautiful benevolence, what bountiful beneficence have been organized and dispensed by these evangelists of the camp and the hospital. Again what shirking of duty, what timidity, what time-serving and men-fearing has there not been,—and cloaked in mantles of christian charity.

While these times of convulsion have not given birth to any great, representative men, (men who are like suns to a system,—put them where you will at once becoming centres of attraction and light,) still have they given no toleration to the mere demagogue and pretender. If no worthy leader, no

well-entitled teacher of the people has appeared, true it is that no charlatan has been able to enlist their sympathies and rally their energies for his aggrandizement or their destruction. If the unmasking has revealed no greatness, it has at least precluded much imposture. I regard this ingredient of our bitter cup as no slight alleviation. When we see men as they are, we can mark them for what they are worth. And whether their worth be great or little, it enables us to estimate the value of their agency in compassing the ends we have in view.

In turning away from this, the last contemplation we indulge of the characteristics and events of the day, shall we not give ear to Him "who giveth songs in the night," that our souls may be cheered, and their gratitude aroused? "For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, nor hid that shall not be known"—"Giving thanks unto the Father who hath delivered us from the power of darkness"—The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"

Thus, even sitting in our thickest gloom, regarding our sharpest sorrows, estimating the burden of our heaviest woe, can we regard the calamities of the times as other than the chastening of the Lord, and so, designed for our spiritual good; and therefore, demanding the tribute of thanks to Him who "chasteneth only them whom he loveth." As we have regarded certain of the aspects of our era, do we not find in each a theme for praise; so that we rise from these reflections to the blessed solace, that our loving Father never faileth to "temper justice with mercy," and therefore, while he chastens His people with darkness, he "giveth them songs in the night."

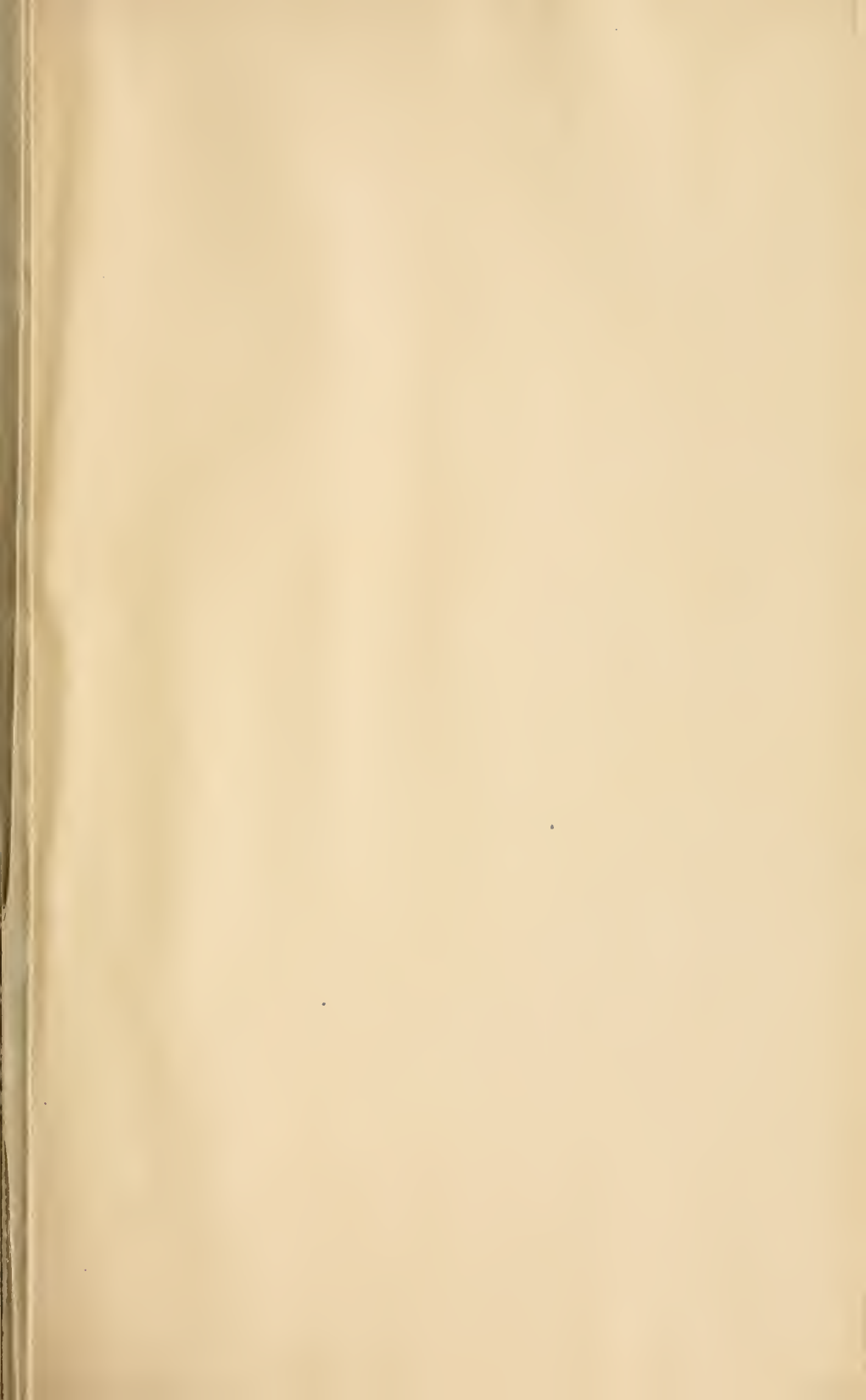
As I approach the conclusion of my Discourse, you doubtless observe, Beloved, that I have omitted all jubilations over victory, all appeals to patriotism, all discussion of the great social question which is commingled with the issue of arms, all pastoral advice touching your duties as citizens, in a political crisis like the present. Not but what I have in common with all whose interests are jeopardized by the convulsions of the country, clear and emphatic convictions upon those great questions submitted for the arbitrament of arms or public opinion, still have I clearer and more emphatic convictions touching the office and duties of the Christian minister, and the solemn proprieties of the place of prayer.

When victories mean nothing but wholesale slaughter and no great or permanent advantage secured, the victory mainly ascertained by measurement of blood and calculation of corpses, I fail to see in it the occasion of thanksgiving to God. But we may thank Him, and must thank him with all the devotion of our heart for the return of peace and the agencies which shall have secured it, whether they be triumphs in the field, the cabinet, the legislative halls or the ballot box, for the cessation from strife and the re-establishment of order, for the enthronement of law and the restoration of social harmony. No voice of authority has taught us that this day is yet come, and while we pray for its rapid appearing, let us prepare our songs of praise to Him who alone giveth the victory.

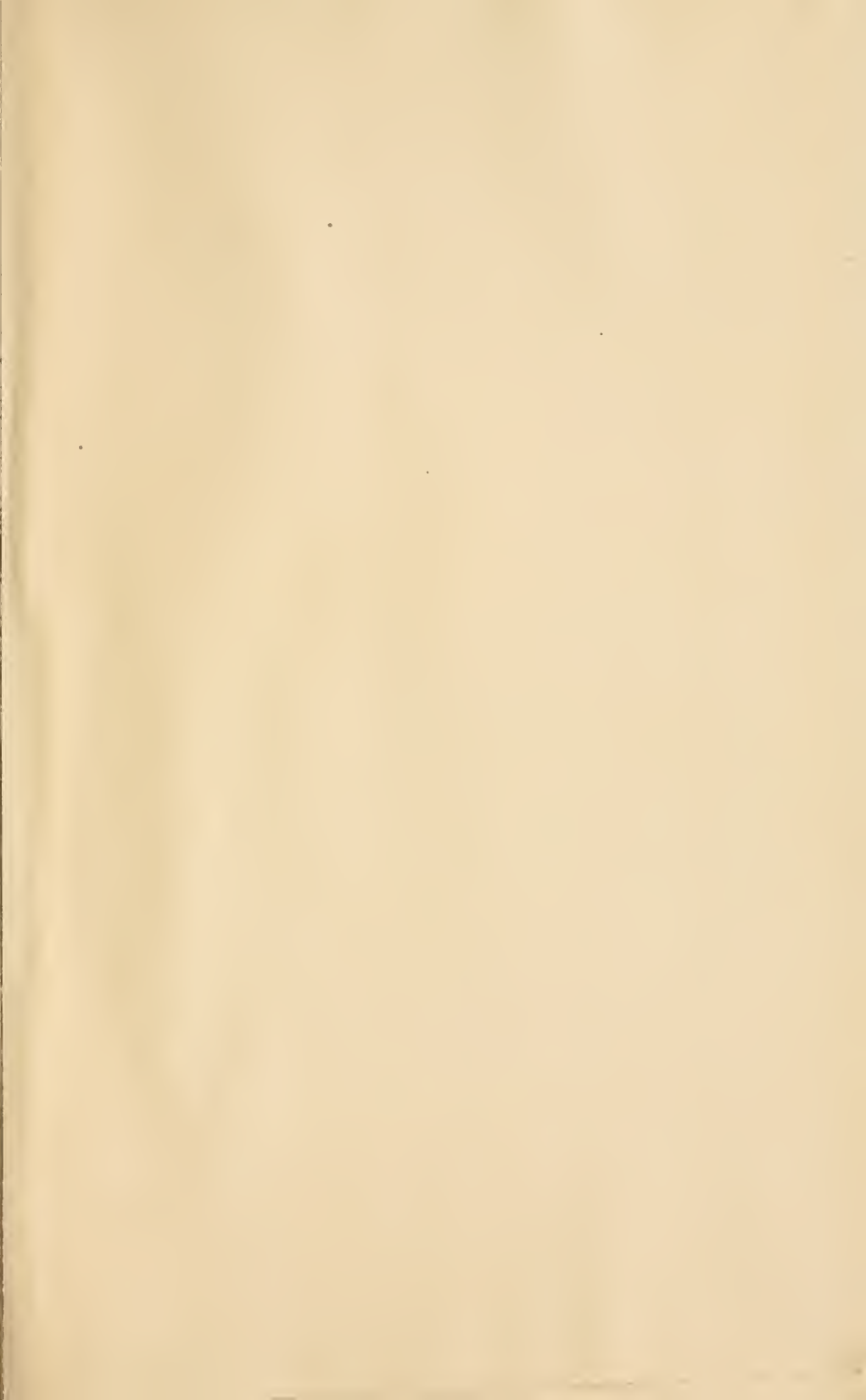
I attempt not now, I never have attempted while exercising the office of your spiritual teacher, to impart lessons of political economy, to make inflammatory appeals to your patriotism, or to stimulate the passions of conflict. I am very free to say, that I regard such things as an abuse of privilege, as derogatory to the office and work of the Christian minister, as a betrayal of the trust you have reposed in me to whom you should look alone for guidance in your pilgrimage to Heaven. The Pastor of souls is not the man, the Church consecrated to the sole service and worship of God is not the place for the argument of secular issues. Too much of this, too much of this already for the influence of the ministry, the spiritual welfare of the people, and the good of the country. High and clear above all the sounds of earth, like the pibroch piercing the air of the Highlands, must the Christian clarion sound its call to arm for the weal of the soul and the honor of Jesus. I leave for others that for which I have no time, no talent, no vocation,—while the cause of Christ and the soul are committed to me as one of the watchmen on the walls of Zion. And though the popular mind now is warped by the strain and pressure of an exacting sentiment, the day will come (for “the word of our God endureth forever,”) when we shall have a return to the simplicity of Gospel preaching, when inflammable themes shall be excluded from our pulpits, when the altar shall not be a tribune of the people, when congregations shall not gather for political instruction and secular meditation, but simply to receive the lively oracles of God, which are only able to make them “wise unto salvation.”

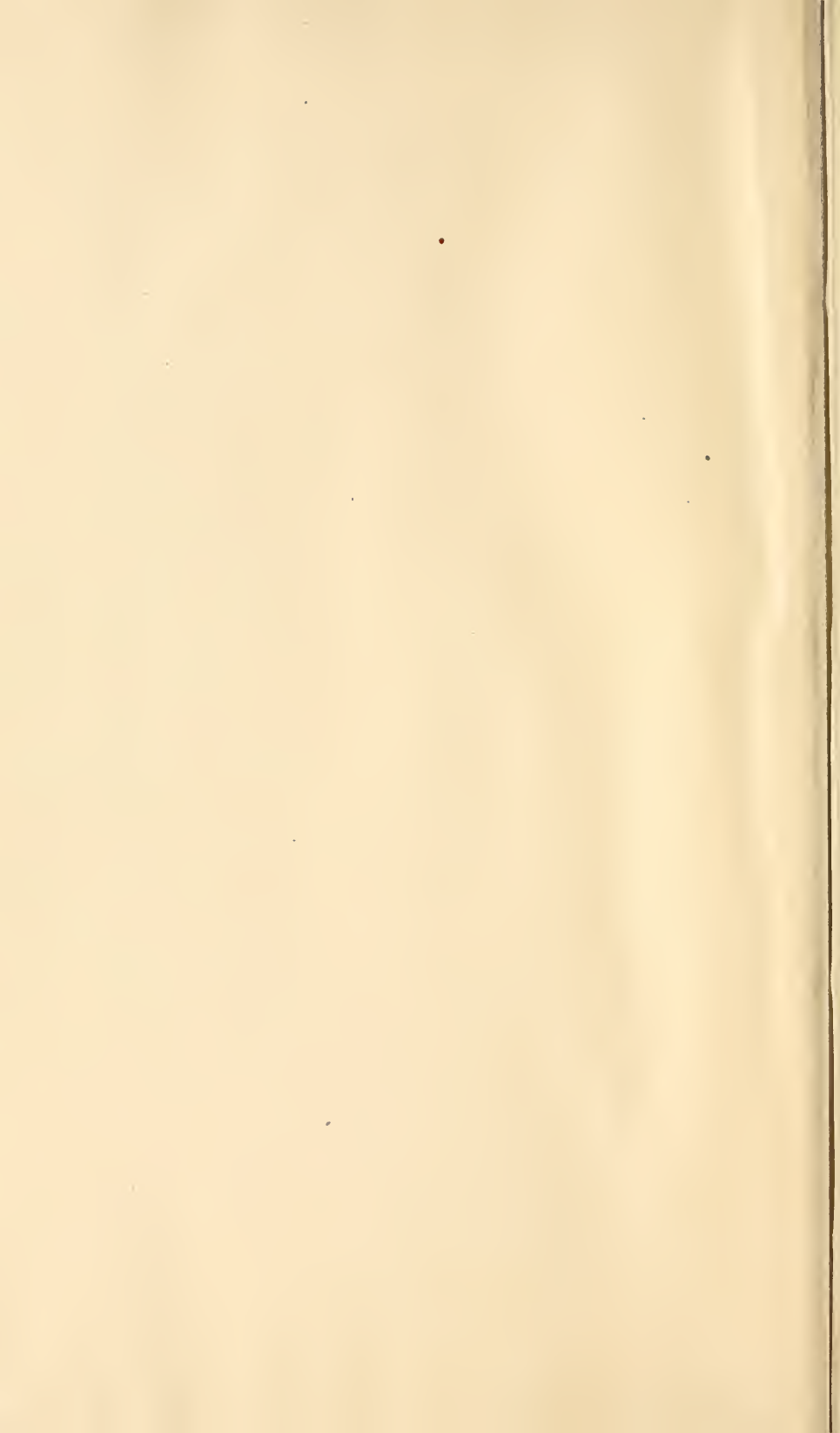
As it is a maxim of the world, beloved, in time of peace to prepare for war, so let it be a maxim of the church, in time of war to prepare for peace. Though God now only “giveth songs in the night,” yet hereafter will He give us Psalms for the morning and Hymns for the noonday. And O may not some melodies be warbled now by our own conscious souls, other than those which He ‘giveth? Is it not time to cease our evil speaking of each other, our suspicions, our false judgments? Shall we not open our arms once more to embrace the friends whose sympathy and love we have frozen by our icy manner, or forfeited by our open hostilities. How long, O God! how long shall our Christian charity refuse fellowship to those who only differ from us in questions we shall ignore in death and forget in eternity. Let us, on this day, when we come to thank God for His preserving care, and acknowledge with gratitude His chastening, let us bury deep in the grave of forgiveness the petty animosities which have embittered our lives and suspended our growth in grace. Here we are, standing in the vestibule of death, our friends each day, passing within its gloomy portal to return no more, and yet we are wrangling with brethren around us the questions which convulse the land we are leaving. Let us rise to higher levels of thought, to more loving forms of life, to the more momentous interests given us to guard. The greater our freedom from passion the greater our liberty, the purer our faith the nobler our patriotism, the more loving and long suffering our human hearts the sooner will they thrill responsive to the joyous strains of peace. Be this then the theme of our song in the night of our national sorrow, and soon the darkness shall be lifted, the orient shall kindle to beauty, and the morning of peace

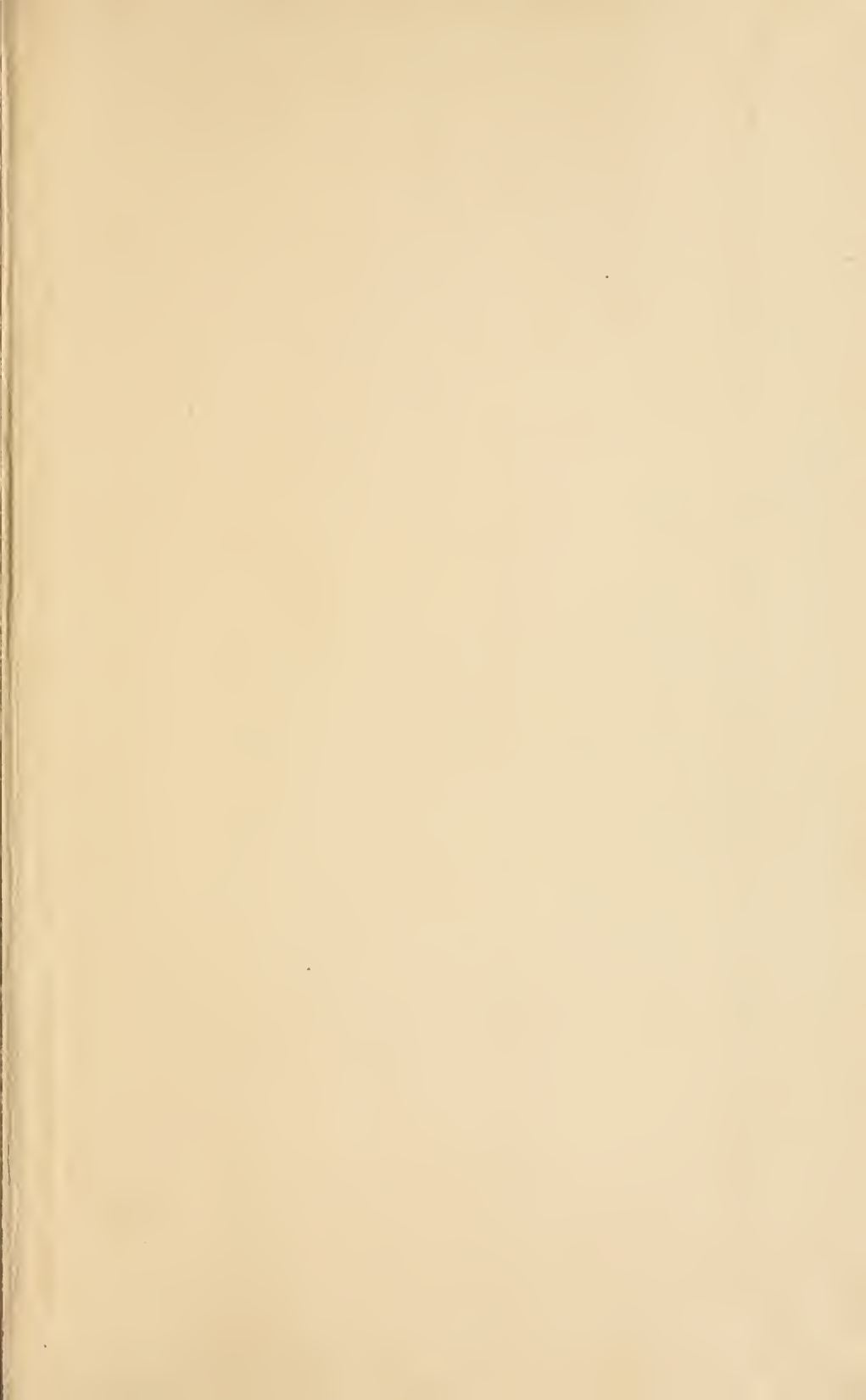
make glad the hearts of our people. The "songs of the night" shall be changed to the anthems of day, and the voice of thanksgiving send upward to God the refrain of the soul,—“weeping may endure for the night but joy cometh in the morning.”











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